

## **Waste**

### **Enhance Diversion of Hazardous Waste from Landfill**

#### **Target(s):**

**Annually divert at least 100,000 pounds of household toxic material and 15,000 pounds small business toxic material from the landfill through hazardous waste collection events, community programs, and educational activities.**

#### **Lincoln Now:**

First piloted in 1985, the Health Department-led Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) education and collection program continues to provide much needed toxicity reduction opportunities for area households. Funded both by city (occupation tax on waste haulers) and grant dollars from the State of Nebraska's Waste Reduction and Recycling Grant Incentive Fund, the HHW program involves both periodic waste collection events and a broad array of educational activities aimed at purchasing less toxic alternatives in addition to guidance on safe use and storage.

The HHW collection program has managed a total of 1,370,795 pounds (685 tons) of hazardous materials from the 33,167 participants who brought HHW to the mobile events. The HHW program has focused on collecting the most highly toxic materials that include: mercury containing products, EPA-banned pesticides, pool chemicals and harsh cleaning solvents. At one event held in early May, 2012 at WalMart, 620 vehicles were processed in four hours, 17,625 pounds of hazardous waste was collected, and 28 volunteers participated in the event.

Household products contain many of the same toxic chemicals utilized in industry, small businesses, and agriculture. All of these products have the potential to exhibit the same properties of industrial hazardous waste and need to be handled with care during use, storage, and disposal in order to protect public health and the natural environment.

Currently, no hazardous waste from small businesses is knowingly accepted at the Bluff Road landfill. If not recyclable, all small businesses are directed to dispose of their hazardous wastes at a permitted hazardous waste facility. This can be financially prohibitive for many small businesses, which in turn can push businesses to make poor decisions or take short cuts in managing their hazardous waste. The Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generator (CESQG) program makes hazardous waste collection available and provides for a true cost effective option for proper waste disposal.

The Lincoln-Lancaster County CESQG collections have benefited hundreds of area small businesses and non-profit organizations over the course of the program's 18 year history. From

coordinating annual collection events to providing technical assistance, the CESQG collection program has reduced the use of, need for storage for, and possibility of improper disposal of hazardous products and toxic pollutants. In 2011, for example, the program diverted over 22,000 pounds, but in 2009 only was able to divert 9,090 pounds.

Some hazardous wastes are conditionally exempt from federal (RCRA) regulations if generators produce no more than 220 pounds or 25 gallons per month. CESQGs typically include small businesses such as auto repair shops, painters, medical clinics, printers, and non-profits, to state and local agencies.

HHW and CESQG programs promote citizen awareness, reduce the amount of hazardous waste in the city landfill, limit the amounts of hazardous waste dumped down a drain and into city wastewater, and reduce potential safety hazards in homes and businesses. The collection programs, however, are limited in their accessibility due to the lack of a permanent hazardous materials and waste management facility.